

Shallow Water Area Management Workshop For Landowners

On the evening of March 29, 2001, approximately 100 landowners gathered at the Louisiana National Guard Armory in Winnsboro to learn about managing shallow water areas for wildlife. Many of the participants were farmers or landowners with lands enrolled in conservation programs like the Wetlands Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Program, and Louisiana Waterfowl Project.

Over the years the importance of flooding farm fields during the winter months was witnessed by many landowners. The water protects soil from erosion, helps recharge ground water, controls weeds, aids in stubble decomposition, and generally improves soil productivity and water quality. However the importance of these flooded fields, shallow water areas, and "moist soil units" as valuable wintering waterbird habitat are now being realized. Whether these areas are managed for good stewardship (environmental benefits), personal enjoyment (bird watching, duck and goose hunting), or for supplemental income (recreational leases, ecotourism), knowing more about how to benefit wildlife is prerequisite to success. That knowledge is what this workshop sought to provide.

John Pitre, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Wildlife Biologist presented eligible practices available through conservation programs, the requirements associated with creating shallow water areas, and the advantages and disadvantages of planting foods and utilizing natural vegetation. John also spoke about the management of wood duck nest boxes, and the potential threat of the invasive plant, giant salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*) to aquatic ecosystems.

Nick Smith, Ducks Unlimited Inc. Project Biologist discussed the Louisiana Waterfowl Project, and went into detail on how and why to manage water levels and manipulate vegetative succession to provide the most benefit to waterfowl.

Workshop participants asked numerous questions and several commented favorably that "they greatly appreciated the quality of technical information provided". Participants were also treated to grilled hamburgers and refreshments. Donna Remides, Northeast Delta RC&D Coordinator organized this workshop, and it was the third of its kind presented. Last fall similar workshops were conducted in Tallulah and Shreveport. More are planned, with the next workshop scheduled for Natchitoches this fall. The sponsors of this event included; Northeast Delta RC&D Council, Northeast Soil and Water Conservation District, USDA-NRCS, and Ducks Unlimited Inc. Several individuals contributed their time and talents to ensure the success of this workshop.

#

**For more information, contact: John Pitre at john.pitre@la.usda.gov,
telephone (318) 473-7809**